THE CHANGE AGENT AND CULTURAL VALUES: CASE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States is now involved in a great effort to spread new ideas, techniques, and financial assistance to presently underdeveloped countries of the world. Many Americans are involved in this work. According to government figures, there were 1,590,000 American citizens living abroad on March 31, 1959. About one-third of these were civilians and the others were members of the United States Armed Forces and their dependents.[1] Since this census, the number of Americans living and working overseas has increased steadily year by year.

This report was limited to the study of overseas American civilians who are involving themselves in the internal affairs of the countries of the Middle East. Many types of Americans are engaged in this work. There are government technical aid advisers, members of philanthropic foundations, and private citizens who are concerned with improving the economic conditions of underdeveloped countries. An increasing number of business men are bringing new products to developing nations. They are also

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[1]Harlan Cleveland, Gerald J. Mangone, and John C. Adams, The Overseas American (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), p. 1.

interested in economic progress of these countries as a means of increasing business opportunities. There are the missionaries who formerly were interested only in promoting their faith, but now are expanding their work to include various types of assistance to people in countries they serve. All of these people are concerned with directed change. As change agents they are involved in diplomatic and human relation assignments as well as teaching technical skills. They need to prepare themselves thoroughly for contacts with different kinds of people who constitute the population of the area where they will work.

The past record of directed change effort indicates that without some knowledge of the local culture, most new ideas or techniques introduced into the developing countries will either fail or do more long-range harm than short-range good. The changes must be integrated into the local culture in order to be considered successful. If the new idea remains behind when the change agent leaves, the effort has been sucoessful. The change agent not only needs to be a specialist in his field, but he also needs to develop the ability to make these specialties available to persons with customs and outlook on life that differ from his own.[2]

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[2]Conrad M. Arensberg and Arthur H. Niehoff, Introducing Social Change (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1964), p. 6.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to investigate some of the cultural factors that affect change agents as they enter developing countries of the Middle East to live and work. The cultural factors studied included those to (1) help new change agents to better understand their reactions to strange cultural situations; (2) assist change agents to understand some of the crucial factors affecting the cultural change process which influences success or failure in the transfer of ideas and techniques; (3) help change agents understand the problems of communication between two cultures; (4) assist American change agents to better understand their own culture in order to develop more tolerance and understanding of cultural traits of Middle East countries; and (5) interest change agents in the need for further study of cultural factors related to directed change.

Importance of the study. Though the United States has spent billions of dollars on foreign aid programs, it has gained neither the affection nor respect of the rest of the world. In fact, in some countries of the Middle East the Americans are disliked, in others, they are tolerated. There are many reasons for these feelings of the people of non-Western cultures. The main reason for ill-feeling is caused by American behavior. As a nation, we are likely

to be guilty of great ethnocentrism. We tend to think our way of doing things is superior to ways of other cultures. In many of our programs we use a heavy-handed technique in dealing with local nationals. We insist everyone else do things our way. Consequently, unintentionally, we manage to convey the impression of being "superior" and "impatient" through our actions.

Our behavior does not originate from malice, but from ignorance. Americans are not only almost totally ignorant of what is expected in other countries, but we are equally ignorant of what we are communicating to other people by our own normal actions.

It is not necessary for Americans to be universally loved. One often hears from American officials that "we don't have to be liked, just as long as we are respected." One can take little consolation from this statement because it is very difficult to respect someone whom you dislike. In many situations we are neither liked nor respected.

The above is a statement of the general attitude of Americans reflected by foreign nationals of most developing countries. However, this does not represent their attitude toward all Americans living and working overseas. Many American change agents in all categories of occupations have endeared themselves to the people of developing countries through their sincere desire and efforts to help

people and their understanding of the local culture.

With the increasing number of Americans being sent to the Middle East and other parts of the world as change agents, it is time we learned how to communicate effectively with foreign nationals. It is time we try to find ways to stop alienating people with whom we are trying to work and help.[3]

Source of information for this report. The information included in this report was obtained from a review of the literature concerning this subject. Additional material was provided by the observations of the writer during his twelve years experience as a change agent in the Middle East and the Far East.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Words have different meanings or perhaps slight variations in connotation with different people. Also the use and meaning of words vary in different parts of the world. A list of definitions is given below of certain terms used in this report so that everyone will have a common understanding of what is meant.

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[3]Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 14.

Change agents. Those who funotion as agents of change in cross-cultural situations are designated in this report as ohange agents. Change agents inolude government offi-cers with authority to regulate the aotivities of members of oommunities within their jurisdiotion. Also civil servants such as extension agents and directors of public programs of all sorts are ohange agents. The degree to which these officials are empowered to initiate change varies considerably, but all are ooncerned with the problems of cooperation in some kind of ohange. Educators are obvious change agents, especially where what is taught in schools is at variance with what is taught in pupils' homes. Religious missionaries represent one of the oldest kind of change agents. Businessmen are change agents. Whenever any outside business activity establishes itself in a new locality, it inevitably functions as a powerful force for change.

Community. In this report the term "oommunity" will be used in the broadest sense, referring to any social entity in a olient relationship with ohange agents. It may be a rural village, a metropolitan government, a tribe, or a nation. There are many kinds of social units. Never-theless, the human requirements for getting the oooperation of members of a power elite in helping them to develop an effeotive national program is not unlike those for getting

the cooperation of a group of villagers in helping them develop a village program.

Cross-cultural communication. Much of the difficulty Americans have with people in other countries stems from the fact that so little is known about cross-oultural communications. Cross-oultural oommunications in this report has larger meaning than to speak and read the language of the oountry of assignment. Of equal importanoe is the non-verbal language which exists in every country of the world and among various groups within each country. This larger oontext of communication inoludes the elaborate patterning of behavior which prescribes the handling of time, spatial relationships, attitudes toward work, play, and learning. In addition to what we say, we are oonstantly communioating our real feelings through our behavior. Sometimes it is correctly interpreted by other nationalities, but more often it is not.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into five parts as follows:

Chapter I is the introduction which includes a statement of the problem discussed in this report. It states the objeotives to be accomplished and indicates the importance of this study to American change agents going overseas to work in a strange oultural setting.

Chapter II will provide a description of the different reactions that change agents have when they live and work in a culture different than their own. Change agents, by understanding the effect of "culture shock" upon other people, can better control their own reactions to similar symptoms.

Chapter III describes the problem of cross-oultural communications. This will include the problems and advantages of learning the looal language. Also the selection and use of an interpreter is discussed.

Chapter IV will oompare some of the American and Middle East cultural values and indicate some of the influences of these values upon the cultural change process. This chapter will outline some of the American cultural values which the overseas change agent tends to take for granted but which, if understood, can help in his interaction with people of the Middle East.

Chapter V attempts to summarize the report and draw from it conclusions which may be useful to people who will be involved in overseas work, or by others who may have an interest in this field.

CHAPTER II

CULTURE SHOCK

The term "oulture shock" has become widely known to change agents concerned with overseas development programs. It refers to the emotional stress of adjusting to a new cultural setting. Actually, the same patterning in the adjustment process occurs whenever Americans relocate geographically in the United States if one encounters emotionally salient differences in social sub-systems. Gullahorn and Gullahorn described the relocation process in the United States as often engendering the same intensity of responses found in oross-cultural situations.[1]

Goodenough indioated culture shock was the result of being suddenly removed from familiar settings in which a person knows all the little things needed to get along.[2]

People who go overseas generally expect things to be different in large and predictable ways. They expect unusual clothing, new scenery, strange language, and major inconveniences which are part of the work abroad. What

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[1]John T. Gullahorn and Jeanne E. Gullahorn, "An Extension of the U-Curve Hypothesis," Journal of Social Issues, XIX (July, 1963), 34.

[2]Ward H. Goodenough, Cooperation in Change (New York: Sage Foundation, 1963), p. 399.

seems to create the difficulty is something more subtle and more intimately subversive. It is the feeling of inadequacies that results from not knowing just how to act among strangers. It is not knowing how to greet people, how to say no without offending, or how to deal with people generally. It is the product of ignorance of both the local culture and the local language.

Goodenough found the reaction can be quite disturbing to have all the little things one has taken for granted suddenly removed. Some people react to this situation in a positive manner and consider the experience an adventure. Others are terrified and incapacitated. Few, however, do not find it stressful to be continually operating in ignorance of the meanings they should attribute to the actions of others.[3]

The simplest manifestation of "culture shock" is the tendency to raise ones voice to a shout when one finds a foreigner unable to understand simple English. At its strongest, "culture shock" can have various effects. It can reduce one to numb fatigue in early attempts to follow a foreign language. Sometimes anger develops against the foreigners, or a frenzied retreat into the familiar.[4]

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Arensberg and Niehoff, op. cit., p. 188.

One anthropologist defined the symptoms of "culture shock" as excessive preoccupation with drinking water and food; fear of physical contact with servants; great concern over minor pains and skin eruptions; hand washing complex; fits of anger over delays and minor frustrations; a fixed idea that people are cheating; delay and refusal to learn the language of the country; an absent-minded far away stare, sometimes called tropical stare; a feeling of helplessness; and a longing to be back home, to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to visit one's relatives, and in general, to talk to people who really make sense.[5]

Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams described two extreme types of reaction to "culture shock"--the Americans who "go native" and the Americans abroad who "never left home."

They described the Americans who feel that the way to overcome "culture shock" is to forget America and melt into a new, adopted nationality and culture. The term reserved for this type of change agent is the "snuggler." They go native to the extent of adopting those local forms of conduct that they expect will provide them with fuller entry into the community and the kind of relationships they

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[5]George M. Foster, Traditional Cultures: and the Impact of Technological Change (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1962), Communication from Dr. Kalervo Oberg, pp. 187-188.

seek.[6]

Goodenough reports that change agents cannot fully master the local culture and their efforts at "going native" are likely to appear to the community's members as amusingly inappropriate. Local reaction will depend largely on what people sense are the motives for trying to "go native." They may respect the change agents' efforts if they see it as reflecting a genuine concern to master the local language and culture. If they see it as a sign of emotional weakness, they will be inclined to scorn it. For the change agents to "go native" for personal reasons is, in effect, to put their own emotional needs ahead of the needs of the community. When change agents who try to "go native" meet with resistance from their clients to suggestions they have made, they may interpret this as personal rejection by the people whose affection and acceptance they are seeking. This resistance to change may be due to some factor in the development situation that needs further clarification and study. These change agents are often inclined to see their clients behavior, not as normal response to the stresses of change, but as a personal betrayal, and they conclude their clients are fickle, calculating, and untrustworthy.[7]

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[6]Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, op. cit., p. 28.

[7]Goodenough, op. cit., p. 403.

The "snuggler" simply wants to belong. They are prepared to pay what they think is the price of belonging, the rejection of their own backgrouna as Americans. When they find they cannot "pass" as Arabs or other Middle Easterners, when they realize they will always be on the outside looking in, the "snugglers" may neurotioally turn their wrath and resentment on their clients who won't permit an American to escape his culture.

Many change agents do, in fact, live at the "village level" physically and emotionally. If they really "go native," they find their effeotiveness is blunted. This approach creates difficulty in the ohange agents relationship with other Americans with whom they must have dealings. Also the change agents oan't really "fit" into the culture he tries to imitate, thus they will find it difficult to develop good working relations with responsible members of the client oommunity. After all, the ohange agents were sent, not to embraoe the whole oulture, but to make fundamental changes in that culture.

At the opposite end of the oontinuum are those change agents, who in their single minded ethnooentrism, never learn the rudiments of adjustment. Perhaps a few feeble attempts are made to contaot and understand the local culture. The change agents beoome embarrassed when in situations where people point and laugh, and then they look

again and laugh some more. We often do the same thing ourselves to foreign visitors who excite our ouriosity without meaning any harm by it. Experiences like these drives some change agents back to familiar American friends and familiar settings with no more contact with the local community than is absolutely necessary to carry out job requirements.[8]

This type of change agent often becomes occupied with the problem of adjusting people of the local community to American norms.

Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams found in their investigation that many of America's foreign friends thought the cheerful assumption that "American" is a synonym for "best" is even harder to take than "snuggling" is. They found the local community resented Americans taking for granted that the highest aspiration for any people was to be like Americans.[9]

Walter J. Ong in writing about "That American Way" stated that American achievement has become a psychological handicap. The United States has a successful working machine for converting people of other nations into Americans, provided they come to America. We can make anyone over into ourselves, but we cannot make ourselves over,

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[8]Goodenough, op. cit., p. 400.

[9]Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, op. cit., p. 30.

even imaginatively, into other people.[10]

The change agents who insulate themselves in a special residential quarter for Americans with all the material convenience of home are isolating themselves from the client community. It represents a lack of interest in the community problems and soon affects the cooperation of the client community in change programs.

Fortunately for the United States and client communities, most American change agents range in the middle of this dichotomy of "culture shock."

Experiences with other people and their way of life, once the necessary adjustments to alien customs have been made, is extremely rewarding in many ways. The change agents are subject to strains, especially if they are cut off from members of their own society for extended periods of time. Elenore Smith Bowen has recounted some of these experiences of emotional distress that isolated field workers inevitably experience.[11]

Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook recommended not to aim at "total immersion" in the client culture. It is neither possible nor desirable. While the change agents do not

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[10]Walter J. Ong, "That American Way," America, C (November 22, 1958), 238.

[11]Elenore Smith Bowen, Return to Laughter (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 20.

have to do exactly as others do, they must show a sympathetic interest in the people and their activities. Any evidence of moral disapproval or of condescension will threaten the success of the work of change agents. They advised obtaining the support of key people in the client community. By so doing, the change agents will be assured of support of the followers of these key leaders.[12]

Special training techniques have been developed over the years to cope with "culture shock." Many overseas agencies now view "culture shock" as one would any occupational hazard of high incidence. "Culture shock" may be a limited problem and may not be generalized as previously assumed. Lundstedt reported observations from various Peace Corp groups, and some of these volunteers did not seem to suffer from "culture shock" to any large degree.[13] However, the low pay and other working conditions of the Peace Corp make it attractive to people who are more likely to have a suitable attitude of mind to begin with. Rigorous screening of the Peace Corp eliminates many candidates who would be unlikely to handle the problem of exposure to

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[12]Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), pp. 496-501.

[13]Sven Lundstedt, "An Introduction to Some Cross-Cultural Research," Journal of Social Issues, XIX (July, 1963), 3.

a foreign culture. Finally, the intensive short course in the language and culture of one's clients before actually going among them greatly reduoes the amount of "oulture shock."[14]

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[14]Goodenough, op. cit., p. 401.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATION WITH THE CLIENT COMMUNITY

The greatest challenge to change agents working in a oross-oultural situation is to have useful ideas, to make clear the meanings of these ideas to the olient oommunity, to get the ideas aooepted, and to motivate the people to adopt and praotioe them.[1]

Although we say men are basically alike everywhere, the unlikenesses are still significant enough to blook oommunication and impede change. If ohange agents expect people of reoipient culture to have preoisely the same motivations as they do, or to make the same distinotion of behavior, thought, or value, they are seriously risking failure of becoming ineffeotive in their work.

The worst part of such misapprehension of cultural realities is that it is unintentional on the part of Amerioan teohnicians. Change agents are usually single-minded and speoialized. They generally have little training in oommunicating ideas in cross-cultural situations. When change agents deal with problems set against the known

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[1] J. Paul Leagans, "The Communication Process in Rural Development," Cornell International Cultural Department Bulletin 1 (Ithaoa, New York: New York State College of Agrioulture, A Contract College of the State University at Cornell University, 1963), p. 4.

background of their own oulture, specialization has resulted in great strength. However, in dealing with cross-cultural problems, the conditions do not arise from a familiar background and cannot be taken for granted. These situations are often misunderstood by change agents and sometimes result in frustration, anxiety, withdrawal, despair, and even dislike of the people with whom the change agents are working.

Communication is the process by which two or more persons exchange ideas, facts, feelings, or impressions. Foster described the process as one through whioh the ohange agents initiated the aotion through verbal or visual symbols or a combination of both. These symbols reach the clients directly if the change agents know the local language, otherwise, indireotly through an interpreter. The clients receive these symbols in accordance with a culturally determined understanding of what they mean. When both parties are in agreement as to the meaning of the symbols, then suocessful communication has resulted.[2]

Cultural values differ from one society to another. The concepts of the ideas and techniques that the client oommunity may have is usually quite different than that being promoted by change agents. The ohange agents must

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[2]Foster, op. cit., p. 134.

have knowledge of the ooncepts and behavior that are aooeptable to a particular oulture. Using culturally established channels of communioation is helpful in getting understanding and interaction in the oommunication process.

Interaction between the ohange agents and clients is necessary to determine understanding of ideas. Change agents must make the olients understand clearly what is to be learned. Questions and oomments from the clients and observations of the olient's behavior are good ways to determine if the clients understood the oorreot meaning of the symbols presented. Direot questioning by the ocmmunioator, establishing a friendly environment and a permissive climate are other good methods for encouraging interaction to determine understanding. Without proper understanding, the response may not be as desired. The olients may not know the aotion expected of them.[3]

I. LEARNING THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

It is muoh easier for change agents and the client community to reach understanding if they both use the same spoken language. Communioation is very difficult when change agents try to cross barriers of difference in experience and culture in a language that they do not know.

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[3]Leagans, op. cit., p. 7.

Willingness of change agents to learn the olient's language is essential.

Social and cultural considerations, however, may provide serious barriers to change agents' willingness to learn their clients' language. Although American change agents come from a oountry that has absorbed millions of non-English speaking people in a few generations, most middle-olass Americans have little knowledge of a spoken language other than their own. A strong positive value has developed for learning to speak like native Amerioans. The burden of making themselves understood fell upon the non-English speaking immigrants, while native Americans developed scornful attitudes toward foreign aocent and languages, and the complacent feeling that where language differs, it is up to the other fellow to make the effort. Immigrants to America have been the butt of all kinds of humor, some good, but mostly ill-natured, over their inability to speak without an aocent.

This attitude has become a great handioap to Amerioan change agents working abroad. To learn another language requires that one speak it. This means making all kinds of mistakes that are amusing to native speakers. It is a very unpleasant feeling to find oneself providing others with the same kind of amusement that one has enjoyed at home at the expense of others. When American change agents find

themselves having to make a fool of themselves, as they see it, they often retreat to their familiar language and fail to make the effort required to learn the local language.[4]

The ability to use and understand the local language is of unquestionable value to change agents. Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams advised that language is like other skills, its value is not absolute. It is a tool, not a quality of mind or spirit; skill in communication is no substitute for having something to say.[5]

Adequate comprehension and fluency in a language is not easily acquired. Even though learning another language is a strenuous effort, there is a reward in it beyond the better grasp of reality it gives. There are subtle ways that rapport improves simply because change agents make the effort to learn the client's language. The enthusiasm for a foreign language and the willingness to work hard at learning it are perhaps the most reliable and certainly the most measurable index to culture empathy. Learning the language contributes much to an understanding of the culture with which it is associated. More can be gained, however, if the language study is accompanied with a study of the culture and society.

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[4]Goodenough, op. cit., pp. 389-390.

[5]Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, op. cit., p. 293.

The change agents should not underestimate the damage the lack of language facility can do to their efficiency in carrying out development objectives in the client community. Obviously, if the change agents cannot speak the local language they are terribly handicapped in communication. Language can be learned, but many subtle cues such as voice, tones, gestures, and expressions are implicit in language. The communication pattern of a given society is part of the total cultural pattern.[6]

Unless change agents are familiar with the language, behavior patterns, and non-verbal expressions of communication, it may not always be possible for them to determine client community cooperation on a given project. Adams, in his work in Egypt, found that cultures of the Middle East countries have established within their cultural system stereotyped expressions of esteem and concern that are obligatory whenever two or more persons meet. Since the same expressions are always uttered, interpretation of "friendliness" or "enmity" depends on the meanings conveyed by subtle tones, pitch, or melody. These qualities in their different modes are interpretable to one who is acquainted with their culturally defined meanings. Certain melodic

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[6]Edward T. Hall and William F. Whyte, "Intercultural Communication: A Guide to Mens Actions," Human Organization, XIX (Spring, 1960), 5.

pattern connotes "sincerity," others "irony," "sarcasm," or even "hostility." Certain tones, ways of accenting, abbreviating, or elongating convey different meanings.[7]

In addition to establishing the basic relationships with the client community, these implicit aspects of speech and actions convey a host of meanings that is impossible for change agents to comprehend unless they make a thorough study of the culture. Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, in their field work in the Middle East and Far East, reported that thousands of American change agents had embarrassing experiences from the "negative yes," the "yes" that means "maybe" or even "no," depending on the circumstances. "These people will look you straight in the eye and lie in their teeth" was the gist of dozens of interviews reported by this group.[8] This is a case of pure American ethnocentrism. What the American change agents failed to understand was that in the Middle East and Far East to say "no" is rare. The greater crime is not to say an untruth, but to hurt the feelings of another person. In some languages of Asia, the word for "no" is almost never used. One Far Eastern person explained if he meant "no," he would say

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[7]John B. Adams, "Culture and Conflict in an Egyptian Village," American Anthropologist, LIX (April, 1959), 226.

[8]Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, op. cit., p. 39.

"yes" with his mouth and "no" with his face or by his actions later on. A friend in Iran explained this situation by stating that he did not feel he was lying. Many times when he said "yes" and meant "no," he was saying "yes" to the understanding of the question or the topic of conversation, but at the same time not agreeing to the action required by the discussion.

The explicit characteristics of communication also convey different meanings to different cultures. Man communicates, not by words alone. His tone of voice, his facial expression, and his gestures all contribute to the infitsly varied shades of meaning. The confusion of tongues is almost matched by the confusion of gestures and other cultural cues. One man's nod is another man's negative. In America, we nod our head to mean we agree to something. In Iran, this same nod, accompanied by a small noise made with the tongue, means a very emphatic negative. Each culture has built up over the centuries a tradition of meaningful signs, symbols, gestures, and responses.

In the Middle East, men are permitted, even encouraged, to express feelings without inhibition. In Iran, grown men can weep, shout, gesture excessively and violently, and be admired and sincere. Mossadegh, during his period of rule in Iran exhibited all of these characteristics and he enjoyed a large following within the country.

Hall and Whyte reported that in the Arab world, in discussions among equals, men attain a decibel level that would be considered aggressive, objectionable, and obnoxious in the United States. Loudness promotes strength and sincerity among Arabs; soft tones imply weakness and deviousness. They reported that many Arabs discounted anything heard over the Voice of America broadcast because of the moderate tone of voice used by the announcer.[9]

The American change agents working in a foreign culture are expected to be different. If they are sincere in their desire to respect and accept the local client community as they are, cross-cultural communication can be effective. The change agents must be aware that there are pit-falls in cross-cultural interactions. They must accept the fact that there is more than one way of doing things and the ways of the change agent are no more eternally "right" than the ways of the people of the client community.

II. THE SELECTION AND USE OF AN INTERPRETER

Change agents should try to learn the local language. However, to learn enough of the client community's language to be able to carry on the elaborate communications necessary to express ideas and techniques used in development

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[9]Hall and Whyte, op. cit., p. 7.

programs is often impossible. The alternative is, of course, to use an interpreter, one who knows the change agent's language and the community's language well enough to facilitate communication.

Change agents are usually sent to a recipient country for a limited time with specific responsibility. Sufficient time is usually not available, or it is not always practical for change agents to learn the local language.

Selection of an interpreter. Change agents decrease their control over what is going on when they rely upon an interpreter in the communication process. Much of a change agent's effectiveness depends upon how well the interpreter can do his job. The ideal arrangement is to select an interpreter from the client community who is identified by training and interest with the development program's objectives.

John Unseem, Ruth Unseem, and John Donaghue have recognized a group of elite in developing countries that they call a third cultural group.[10] This group works with American and other Western change agents. They bridge the gap between change agents and the local culture in

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[10]John Unseem, Ruth Unseem, and John Donaghue, "Man in the Middle of the Third Culture: The Role of American and non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration," Human Organization, XXII, (Fall, 1963), 172.

oross-cultural development programs. The change agents are usually in a oountry for only a short time, but this stable group provides continuity to development programs. Representatives of this group will work with change agents in organizing and carrying out development programs. Members of this group know English and are acquainted with Western customs. Most of this group have completed their education in Western cultures.

The interpreter will generally come from this group. However, change agents should be cautioned to use care in the actual selection of the interpreter with whom they will work. The personality of the interpreter and the change agent must be oompatible for good working relationships. Change agents should be sure the interpreter who oomes from this third culture group has knowledge and experience in the field of their specialty. This is especially important if the change agent's work will be in rural areas.

Change agents should look for oultural empathy in selecting an interpreter since change agents may be working in a different sub-oulture than that familiar to the interpreter. The interpreter, having oome from the elite group, may find it difficult to work in development programs in rural areas. The interpreter may come from a class or ethnic group that looks down on the community's members. In this case he may habitually insult the community's members

and deal with them arrogantly. Such persons will not promote a change agent's efficiency and rapport with the client community and it can readily be seen that communication lines would not long remain open under such circumstances.

The interpreter should have a wide range of knowledge of the English language. If his knowledge of the change agents language is too limited to permit his full understanding, all sorts of distortions will be included in the exchange of communication.

The use of an interpreter. The use of an interpreter by change agents will affect the communication process. Whatever information the client community discusses or withholds from discussion depends upon factors present in the interviewing situation. Such factors as rapport, motivation, relative status, personal trust, and others, apply to both the interpreter and change agent independently or together. Frequently, an interpreter, because he is a member of the culture of the client community, can obtain information which is closed to change agents. There is always a chance, however, that because of the interpreter's own interest, he will not pass correct information to change agents.

Even when the qualification of the interpreter approaches the ideal, his effect on the communication process makes it considerably more complex than direct communication

between change agents and the client community. Ideally, the interpreter should be nothing more than an agent transferring messages between the change agent and the client community--a kind of passive instrument. Empirically, however, this is not only difficult, but perhaps impossible.[11]

From the standpoint of small group interaction, there seems to be a natural tendency in three-person groups for a psychosocial coalition to be formed between two of the participants, the third member becoming an isolate to a greater or lessor extent. Mills tested this phenomenon with regard to power relations in problem solving groups. He found a tendency for three-some groups to separate into pairs and the third party to become relatively isolated. The two most active members of the three-some form a solitary bond and the least active member is isolated.[12]

Although many interviews between the change agent, the interpreter, and members of the client community start out with an "exchange of telegrams," the participants quickly tire of the unnatural mode of communication and the locus of interaction settles on a conversation between the

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[11]Herbert P. Phillips, "Problems of Translation and Meaning in Field Work," Human Organization, XVIII (Winter, 1959-1960), 188.

[12]Theodore M. Mills, "Power Relations in Three-Person Groups," American Sociological Review, XVIII (August, 1953), 353-355.

interpreter and the clients. The change agent being in the isolated position because of the language barrier.

These tendencies can be partially overcome if the change agent makes a conscious effort to keep lines of communication open to him. It will help if the change agent will always address questions and conversation to the clients rather than to the interpreter. A triangular seating arrangement is usually the best. A linear arrangement with the change agent between the client and interpreter may improve the change agent-client contact, but soon the interpreter and client will be talking "around" the change agent.[13] However, these techniques are effective only in brief or initial interviews. In lengthy or sustained sessions, they will not prevent the client, and eventually the change agent, from lapsing into the more natural process of communicating with persons who understand their language.

In actual situations where the change agent communicates with the client community through an interpreter, it is often difficult to get an accurate translation because of time difficulty. No interpreter, not even a perfect bilingual, has time to think through the meaning of what is said and immediately interpret it accurately. This is especially true if there is a gap in the English knowledge

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[13]Phillips, loc. cit.

which does not provide the interpreter with a complete understanding of what the change agent is attempting to present to the client community.

The best check on distortion is provided by whatever the change agent has learned of the client community's language. Indeed, the more of the language the change agent knows, the more useful an interpreter can become. This knowledge of language, even though limited, provides a channel for clarification of understanding and meaning in the communication process.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL VALUES INFLUENCING MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The underlying assumption of the discussion in this chapter is that international exchange of technology through change agents is not limited to the mere transmission of ideas and techniques, but also involves heavily the institutions and values of cooperating cultures. There is much evidence to support this statement by the findings of social science, and the increasing wealth of field experience of change agents engaged in planning and implementing development projects in all parts of the world. The practical conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that unless the cultural context is taken into consideration, development projects, and projects of training and demonstration, in any field of technical endeavor will run the risk of delay, frustration, arrested development, or possibly complete failure.[1]

In addition to the social and psychological factors that interfere with change agents' ability to play their role successfully in the development process, the fact

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[1]Afif I Tannous, "Social Values and Technical Cooperation Programs in the Middle East," Rural Sociology, XXI (March, 1956), 76.

remains that their clients have a culture with which they are initially unfamiliar. The change agents' ability to learn the culture is enhanced if they have some idea what to expect. It is in this early period that change agents must establish rapport with their client community. It is important, therefore, that change agents have some knowledge of the kinds of cultural differences that exist and that they be aware of some of the problems of understanding and communication that these cultural differences create.

The following are illustrations of some of the differences in cultural values that change agents encounter in initiating development work in the Middle East.

I. CONCEPT OF TIME

The concept of time plays a very important role in the culture of Americans. It signifies to us action, achievement, moving ahead, and progress. The idea of time is instilled in Americans from childhood. We think of time as something fixed in nature, something around us from which we cannot escape, an ever present part of our environment.

Not only do Americans segment and schedule time, they look ahead and are oriented almost entirely toward the future. We like new things and are preoccupied with change. Time is handled with Americans much like materials; we earn it, spend it, save it, and waste it. To us it is somewhat

immoral to have two things going at the same time.[2]

This is not true of the culture of the Middle East. Change agents should understand that an official in the olient oommunity doesn't usually sohedule individual appointments to the exclusion of other appointments. Generally a change agent will telephone in the morning of the day of the desired appointment. If the official is going to be in the office that day a request for an appointment will be responded to with an open invitation to come to his office at any time during office hours. The naive change agent may be surprised upon arrival to the official's office to find several people in the offioe already. The Middle East official rather enjoys seeing several people on different matters at the same time. This atmosphere of doing business, if interpreted in the American scale of time and propriety, seems to signal the change agent to go away, to tell him he is not being treated properly, or to indioate that his dignity is under attack. This is not so. This is merely the Middle East way of doing business. Change agents must learn to discuss their business with olient officials in the presence of other people who have come for business or for visiting.[3]

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[2]Hall, op. cit., p. 29.

[3]Hall and Whyte, op. oit., p. 8.

Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams indicated that appointments to do business appear to be the most frequent casualty of contrasting concepts of time. They illustrate various concepts of appointment time by the time people of various culture arrive for dinner. If an American is invited to a dinner at eight o'clock, he will arrange to be there between five and fifteen minutes after eight. His Scandinavian friend will have arrived on the dot at eight o'clock. A Latin American may politely come to dinner at nine, some Ethiopians may come even later, and a Javanese, having courteously accepted the invitation in order not to hurt the feelings of the host, may not show up at all.[4]

Edward T. Hall pointed out that for Americans to be kept waiting in an outer office for an appointment for forty-five minutes is an "insult period," whereas in some countries forty-five minutes would not be at the tail end of the waiting scale, but somewhere near its beginning.[5]

Advance notice for meetings or conferences is often referred to in America as "lead time," an expression which is significant in a culture where time schedules are important. While it is learned informally, most of us are aware of how it works in our own culture, even though it is

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[4]Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, op. cit., p. 32.

[5]Hall, op. cit., p. 27.

difficult to state the rules technically. In the Middle East "lead time" is not nearly so important or so long as is required in the United States. Any period longer than a week may be too long. The informal structure of their time system places everything beyond a week into a single category of "future" in which plans tend to "slip off their minds." Change agents working in the Middle East should leave their schedules flexible enough to adjust for important meetings or appointments called on short notice. Also, change agents should develop an acceptable attitude toward the Middle Eastern concept of "lead time," not to become annoyed about short appointment notices, and make the most of the opportunity it presents.[6]

In American culture our work is oriented more or less by the clock. The Middle East has more of a tendency to be task oriented. To finish a particular job requires a certain amount of time. If more time is required than is feasible without a break, the over-all task is broken down into convenient parts. In the United States, we allot a certain amount of time for a conference to solve a certain problem. If decisions are not made within the allotted time, a future meeting will be set to complete the discussion. In a task oriented society, when a meeting is

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[6] Ibid., p. 26.

called, the problem is generally solved at one meeting regardless of the amount of time required. However, in government and industry, the trend is more and more toward time oriented work schedules.

In the Middle East, a highly developed time-consciousness is lacking, especially among rural people who constitute the large majority. Rural people are bewildered and overwhelmed by our pace. To them life is not ticked off by seconds, minutes, and hours. They go by the sun and moon, by seasons, and by long seemingly endless years. Change agents, working with training or development programs with rural people should make sure that the participants would be subject to a pace, a volume, and a variety of activities that would not be beyond their capacities to absorb and integrate.

Change agents would be inviting frustration if they should expect village people to show up for programs on time, to produce results on schedule, or to respond in general as the American farmer would.[7]

II. CONCEPT OF WORK

A widely held value in American culture, especially among the middle class people, is that work is a good thing

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[7]Tannous, op. cit., p. 78.

in and of itself. We have the concept that to be idle is to be lazy and is something close to sinfulness. The responsible American, when he does not have to work, will look around for something to do.[8] Man-made work is a common phenomenon in our business establishments and government bureaus, because we feel that it is wrong for people not to be busy. This same attitude does not prevail in the Middle East. Work is not valued as an end, rather it is seen as a means to an end. Farmers of the Middle Eastern rural areas work very hard during the crop season, but during the winter months they have considerable leisure time. There are certain things that need to be done in the routine of living. The farmer does these jobs. When there is nothing that has to be done, it is proper to relax. From their point of view made-work is an absurdity. Change agents should understand this concept and realize that work whose relevance is not recognized and valued ends not clear appear to be made-work, and is reacted to negatively.[9]

Rural villagers of the Middle East, although isolated and traditional, are by no means cut off from the social and political ferment of the urban centers. Many villagers

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[8]William M. Robin, Jr., American Society: A Sociological Interpretation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), pp. 421-424.

[9]Goodenough, op. cit., p. 485.

have relatives working in cities to which they have migrated in search of progress and the better life. Many villagers travel to holy cities on religious pilgrimages. Radio is not only a link to the twentieth century, but a symbol in the village of status and prestige. Villagers have heard about new things to improve their life and are ready to welcome progress in the form of technical and social change. The villagers are waiting for government or some other outside agency to bring about this imperfectly understood "progress." Villagers do not have the ability to organize themselves and to request services from their government. Thus, they do nothing to advance progress themselves. Instead, they passively accept the innovations that are brought to them, and, once the agency of change is removed, they often lapse into old ways of doing things.[10] American change agents with their notion of public responsibility, initiative, and grass-root democracy may have difficulty understanding the apathy in the work habits of the villagers to initiate changes. Change agents must first understand the attitudes, values, and needs of the villagers. The villagers will organize work for a program if it fills a need in their community.

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[10]Richard H. Nolte (ed.), The Modern Middle East (New York: Atherton Press, 1963), pp. 112-113; and Arthur A. Niehoff, A Case Book of Social Change (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966), p. 164.

Status considerations among people of the Middle East may lead to their avoidance of anything bearing the stigma of manual labor. With the enthusiasm for national development generated in the Middle East, this consideration is diminishing as a factor affecting developing programs. However, this division still exists between the educated elite and the agricultural profession. It is a historical tradition described by the scribes of ancient Egypt who used the comparison of the advantages of a scholar's life with the hard lot of the peasantry to encourage their pupils to master their script.[11] This same thing now happens in Middle East villages. Farmers in the village who are financially able to send their sons to school through the high school level, find they have lost their sons to the village forever. The son will migrate to the urban area for work in government or industry. Village life and work in agriculture are held in low regard by the people of the Middle East.

The status difference between the farmer and the agricultural worker will result in the agricultural specialist telling the farmer what to do rather than showing him. The dress of the agricultural specialist indicates that they are more eager to demonstrate their social distance

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[11]Henri Frankfort, The Birth of Civilization in the Near East (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 104.

from the farmer than to demonstrate improved agricultural practices. The change agents should understand the social barriers existing between farmers and all government agenoy specialists. These influence the progress of development programs in rural areas.[12]

III. CONCEPT OF RELIGION

Islam is the predominant religion of the Middle East. It sets the basic pattern of life for the people, and has far-reaching effects within the social, eoonomic, and technioal spheres.[13]

Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam.[14] This means oomplete abstinence from food and drink from daylight to darkness. Change agents should understand that under such an ordeal, the human organism has to adjust in the form of greatly reduced output. Development programs must adjust acoordingly to avoid misunderstanding and frustration. American change agents should avoid eating openly during working hours when with Muslim colleagues who are observing their faith. This

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[12]Charles J. Erasmus, Man Takes Control: Cultural Development and American Aid (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), p. 84.

[13]Tannous, op. cit., p. 76.

[14]Morroe Berger, The Arab World Today (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 38.

will help to build rapport and cooperation among co-workers by showing respect for their religion.

The Koran prohibits the taking of interest.[15] Up to the last century this was observed though often there were informal understandings about gifts which the borrower would make the lender as an expression of his appreciation. With the advance of capitalism this part of the Koran came to be reinterpreted to mean that interest should not be charged on loans used for human need, but this restriction did not apply to loans for business purposes.[16] The wisdom of both cultures, the change agents' and the local specialists concerned is called upon to devise procedures whereby credit programs may be established without violating religious rules.

Many underdeveloped countries of the Middle East are undertaking land reform programs. There are certain religious factors that change agents should consider in designing changes in the land tenure systems of Muslim countries. These include the Muslim inheritance law and the institution of the Waqf (land held in trust by the Islam organization).[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 52.

[16] Huston Smith, The Religions of Man (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 225.

[17] Nolte (ed.), op. cit., pp. 185-199.

IV. CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM

Nationalism is uppermost in the minds of Arab leaders and the people. It has been the underlying basis in their struggle, first against foreign control and later in support for reformist agitation.[18]

Hagan states nationalism is the unifying force for underdeveloped oountries which have recently gained independence and are striving to develop their resources.[19]

Halpern described nationalism as the principal political manifestation of social change in the Middle East. Nationalists exist beoause there is social change, and hence, the basio problem confronting nationalists is not nationalism, but social ohange.[20]

Change agents working with the olient community in development programs in Middle East countries must make allowance for strong national consciousness, and at the same time utilize it as a motivating force for attainment

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[18]Hazem Z. Nusiebeh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 96.

[19]Everett E. Hagan, On the Theory of Social Change (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1962), pp. 255-256; and R. B. MacLeod, "Some Social Psychological Problems," Journal of Social Issues, XV (July, 1959), 71.

[20]Manifred Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 196-213.

of development objectives. The Middle Eastern administrative or technical leaders engaged in cooperative projects must be assured that their national prestige will not be jeopardized as the result of working with American change agents.

Programs of development, based on voluntary cooperation by the people and motivated by their needs as they see them, are inherently a slow process of building up from the grass-roots. Quint, in his study of a village in Iraq, stated that the only way innovation could be effective in the village is through meeting the peoples' needs based on change that does not threaten the established value pattern.[21] This constitutes the most fundamental approach to Middle East development in order to bridge the wide traditional gap separating the small elite minority and the deprived rural masses. Yet, the prevailing spirit of nationalism is impatient with this slow process. It is eager to get things done and to attain nationally tangible results in the shortest possible time.[22] Tannous states that American change agents working in the Middle East must understand that the

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[21]Malcolm N. Quint, "The Idea of Progress in an Iraqi Village," Middle East Journal, XII (Autumn, 1958), 384.

[22]Afif I Tannous, "Assumptions and Implications of Community Development," Human Organization, XII (Fall, 1954), 3.

forces of nationalism constitute a major drive toward economic development. Cooperation and compromise in the face of this dilemma are called for on the part of change agents and responsible local technicians who are in charge of planning and implementing technical cooperation programs.[23]

V. CONCEPT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Proper introduction and identification of an individual in the Middle East, especially in the rural areas, does not end with the announcement or listing of his name and profession. His family group must be ascertained, as well as his tribal or native village community.

The individual in isolation is not important. He is complete as a social being only when related to his family and community. These, indeed, are the two primary foundations of Middle East culture. The emphasis on the family is upon the blood ties, not only within the biological unit of parents and children, but also within the larger group of the extended family, and the still larger kinship group.[24] The strength of the kinship group is described by Quint. If, for example, a fight or argument in which blood has been shed arises between two individuals or two groups, the

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[23] Tannous, "Social Values and Technical Cooperation Programs in the Middle East," op. cit., p. 77.

[24] Ibid.

villagers must decide upon individual courses of action. In reality, there is only one decision possible. Tradition rules that the villager must always support his relative. Thus, he picks up the nearest weapon and joins the fray. He can ask neither the oause of the fight, nor with whom justice lies. He can only help his relative. Defense of family members in time of crisis is one of the absolute rules of village life.[25]

The strength of the oommunity derives from intensive association and social intercourse by people living in close proximity. The isolated farmstead, with the emphasis upon the initiative of the farmer and individual family as we know in the United States, is non-existant in the Middle East. The average Middle East farmer, whether owner or share-cropper, lives not on a farm, but in a village near his fields. For generations families have lived in the same village and tilled the same land. Each village oonsists of a number of kinship groups, sub-divided into smaller family units, and usually interrelatsd through marriage. Life follows a changeless pattern dictated by custom, religion, and the cycles of the agricultural seasons.[26] This is the basic pattern which prescribes for the Middle

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[25] Quint, op. oit., p. 115.

[26] Don Peretz, The Middle East Today (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 16.

East villager his attitudes and behavior in daily living. Family and community consideration are uppermost in his mind when he is to make significant decisions, including participation in various development projects. In such a cultural setting, change agents promoting programs based upon an approach to individuals would have an extremely limited chance for success. The process of dynamic self-help will not be established unless people are involved in terms of family and community organization.

VI. CONCEPT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The personal touch in human relations is a dominant feature of life in the Middle East. Contracts and other forms of written agreements are used in various formal transactions, but they generally play a secondary role. Written contracts are too impersonal to bind or motivate people effectively.

An applicant for a job in the Middle East seldom depends only upon filling out the prescribed application form. He must have someone in his family or a person of influence make a direct or indirect appeal to the responsible official or boss in his behalf.

Often courts settle disputes between two individuals, or feuds between village or tribal groups by legal means. In the United States when the final legal action is taken

the case is olosed. This is not the case in the Middle East. When the courts complete their action then the traditional mediation of the dispute must take plaoe. Through personal appeals to both sides, usually accompanied with some kind of settlement, it succeeds in bringing about reconoiliation of the parties involved. King Hussain of Jordan, during the summer of 1965, oalled leaders of a number of tribes and villages who were involved in blood feuds to his palace. He took group by group, heard their grievances, and mediated the settlement of these blood feuds by traditional methods.

The motivation for aotion is not generated primarily by duties, projects, obligations, or rules, but by interpersonal loyalties.

Change agents faced with such a situation in planning and implementing development programs should consider the advisability of oomplicated written agreements and contraots in the Middle East where personal relationships are so important. Change agents should simplify regulations, keep impersonal prooedures to a minimum, and personal relationships as the dominant feature in working with the client community.

VII. CONCEPT OF SEGMENTATION

The countries of the Middle East have highly stratified social orders. The societies tend to be divided into

an upper and lower economic class, with a very small or virtually non-existant middle class.

At the top is a small but very powerful elite group. This group includes the leaders of thought, the controlling members of the government, large landlords, and prosperous businessmen.

The great majority of the people of the Middle East, mostly in rural areas, have low incomes and low level of living. The gap between the elite and the mass of the people is wide and the channels of communication inadequate.[27]

The impact of nationalism and improved methods of transportation and communication are tending to undermine the traditional segmented societies of the Middle East. Also enlightened elements of the Middle East have become increasingly concerned about improving traditional agriculture

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[27] Hagan, op. cit., pp. 61-75; Philip M. Hauser, "Cultural and Personal Obstacles to Economic Development in Less Developed Areas," Human Organization, XVIII (No. 2, 1959), 81; Bert Hoselitz, "Social Stratification and Economic Development," Internation Social Science Journal, XVI (No. 2, 1964), 240; D. G. Madelbaum, "Planning and Social Change in India," Human Organization, XII (Fall, 1953), 12; Manning Nash, "Some Social and Cultural Aspects of Economic Development," Economic Development and Cultural Change, VII (January, 1959), 147; Peretz, op. cit., pp. 17-21; Richard Poston, Democracy Speaks Many Tongues (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 181; Brewster M. Smith, "Attitude and Adjustment in Cross-Cultural Contact: Recent Studies of Foreign Students," Journal of Social Issues, XII (No. 1, 1956), 50; Alfred Smith (ed.), Communication and Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 573; and Tannous, op. cit., p. 79.

and thus raising the level of living of rural people. More and more development programs are aimed to improve the welfare of the people.[28]

Development programs promoted by change agents must recognize fully the significance of the segmented personality of Middle East society, and must be guided by the genuine efforts of leaders who are seeking adequate solutions. In terms of development program implementation, change agents should encourage joint programs to be established for the direct benefit of the people that result in leadership development at various levels of the society, including the village level; that development of human resources will be as much the objective as that of natural resources; and that people themselves will be actively involved in the change process.

VIII. CONCEPT OF GENEROSITY AND HOSPITALITY

Two related values of hospitality and generosity are typically Arab qualities and account for much of their behavior in relation to each other and to outsiders.

Hospitality of the Arab is not merely an exercise of

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[28]Gideon Hadary, "The Agrarian Reform in Iran," Middle East Journal, VI (Spring, 1951), 185; Manfred Halpern, op. cit., pp. 79-104; and Said B. Himadeh, "Economic Factors Underlying Social Problems in the Arab Middle East," Middle East Journal VI (Summer, 1951), 269-283.

the ego. It stems from the desert society and is conneoted with personal safety. The man who dwells in the desert cannot ignore others in it. Anonymity in the desert environment is not possible. Those who ocoupy its space must know each others identity. Thus, the trait of hospitality of the Arabs has grown from the human helplessness in the desert and the need for utter dependence of man upon other men.[29]

An honorable family of the Middle East never closes the door to guests. The guest occupies an honored and privileged position with the host although the relationship between the two may be one of enmity outside the home of the host. The Arab motto is Ahlan Wa Sahlan (you are welcome), which literally means "your path is smooth and you oome to your people.[30]

The guests needs and requests are not taken lightly. Americans visiting Arab homes often find pieces of furnishing or antiques whioh they admire. They are usually pressed by their host to accept the item which they have expressed admiration. This results in embarrassing situations which are not intended by the American guests.

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[29]Berger, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

[30]Harold R. P. Dickson, The Arabs of the Desert (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1949), pp. 195-202.

American change agents should have an understanding and feel for such situations in order to avoid embarrassment, and in order to gain support for their development activities. Change agents should learn how to refuse hospitality and gifts without hurting the feelings of their local friends. Also they should learn the appropriate extent they should accept and reciprocate the hospitality and generosity offered by the client community.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

Each year more and more American change agents are being sent overseas to assist developing nations improve their economic conditions. Though the United States government and private organizations are spending billions of dollars for this work, in general, it has gained neither respect nor affection from the people of recipient countries. The primary reason for this attitude seems to be our lack of knowledge about other cultures and the difficulty of cross-cultural communications.

It was the purpose of this study to investigate some of the cultural factors affecting change agents as they enter Middle East developing countries to live and work. These cultural factors were discussed in the order which change agents experience them in a new cultural setting.

The first experience change agents have when they enter a new country is the adjustment to certain emotional stresses of a culture that is strange to them. This is referred to as "culture shock." This reaction results from suddenly being removed from the familiar setting in which a person knows all the little things needed to get along and placed in a situation where change agents know

neither the local customs nor the local language.

There are two extreme reactions to "oulture shock." These reaotions inolude the change agents who attempt to "go native" as the best way to understand the local culture and gain recognition from local people. They try to adopt the oustoms, including dress and oonduot of the client community. The other extreme is the change agents who are never able to make adjustment to the local culture. These change agents, after some disagreeable incident in the local community, soon retreat to the familiar surroundings of the American oommunity. They make contact with the local people only as required to carry out their work responsibilities. Change agents reaoting to these extreme types of "culture shock" are generally ineffeotive in bringing about directed change.

The effective change agents, which represents the majority of the overseas Americans, ranges somewhere between these two extreme types. Most change agents, after obtaining initial understanding of the new oulture, are able to make the necessary adjustment to alien customs.

Speoial training techniques have been developed over the years to give new change agents better understanding of the nature of "culture shook." Some overseas agenoies now consider "oulture shock" as an occupational hazard with high incidenoe. The Peace Corp, with their seleotion and

training procedures, have greatly reduced the amount of "culture shock" experienced by their employees.

Cultural values differ from one society to another. It is important that change agents have ideas and techniques which are suitable and fit into the local culture. Equally important is the need for change agents to understand the process by which ideas, facts and techniques are transferred to the client community.

The communication process is described as one in which change agents initiate action through verbal and visual symbols or a combination of both. The clients receive these symbols in accordance with a culturally determined understanding of what they mean. When both the change agents and the client community are in agreement as to the meaning of the symbols, then successful communication has resulted. It is much easier for change agents and the client community to reach understanding if they both use the same spoken language.

Language can be learned, but there are many implicit aspects of speech and actions that convey a host of meanings. Explicit characteristics of communication, such as voice and emotional expression, also convey different meanings in different cultures. It is impossible for change agents to fully understand the communication pattern of a given society unless they make a thorough study of the

culture.

Change agents are usually sent to recipient countries for a limited time with specific responsibilities. Usually there is insuffioient time for change agents to learn enough local language to oarry on the elaborate conversation required to express ideas and techniques to the client community. The alternative is to use an interpreter who knows both the change agent's and the oommunity's language well enough to facilitate communication.

It is important that change agents use care in seleoting an interpreter. The interpreter will usually be seleoted from the elite group of the country. The ideal situation is to select an interpreter from the client community who is identified by training and interest with the work of the change agent's specialty. Cultural empathy and a wide range of knowledge of the English language are important qualifications for interpreters.

Change agents, when using an interpreter, should always make an effort to keep the lines of communication open to the client oommunity. There is a natural tendency for the interpreter to carry on communication with the client oommunity and the change agent beooming isolated from the conversation.

Some of the distortion that ooours in the oommunication process when ohange agents use interpreters can be

prevented if the changs agsnts learn enough of the local languags to ohsck the accuracy of the communication.

The exohangs of ideas and tsohniquss from change agents to the client oommunity involves ths institutions and values of ths coopsrating oultures. Unless the cultural context is taken into consideration, development objsctives in any fisld of endeavor will run the risk of failure.

Comparisons were made of soms of ths differencss bstwssn American and Middle East cultural values that change agents encounter in initiation of development work in the Middle East. Difference in concepts of time, work, religion, nationalism, family and community, personal rslationships, segmentation, and generosity and hospitality wsrs discussed.

II. CONCLUSIONS

"Culturs shock" is a wsll known reaction of change agsnts and othsr psopls who enter a strange culturs to live and work. All new changs agents will have csrtain emotional stresses when thsy enter a new country. Experienosd change agsnts are also subject to "culture shook" to a grsatsr or lesser degrse, depending upon ths individual. Change agents should bs awars of the symptoms of this phenomsnon and recognize it for what it is--a temporary condition that will pass as thsy becoms familiar with the local culture.

Understanding this problem usually will prevent change agents from developing extreme conditions of "culture shock" which renders them ineffective in their work.

It was evident from this study that the increasing number of American change agents working overseas and the increasing amount of money being spent on development programs is not gaining prestige and affection for the United States from the people of developing countries. This attitude toward the United States has resulted primarily from the lack of understanding of cross-cultural communication by American change agents. Most American change agents are specialized and highly competent in their field but usually have inadequate training in cross-cultural communications. They tend to have an ethnocentric attitude in their dealings with the client community. This attitude of the change agents does not facilitate cooperative exchange of ideas or rapport between the change agents and the local people. American change agents must be aware of the pitfalls in cross-cultural communication. They must accept the fact that their convictions are in no respect more eternally "right" than those of someone else.

The cultural concepts discussed in this report contain important factors which affect development programs in the Middle East. Change agents involved in planning and implementing development programs must consider these factors

and coordinate projects to fit into these concepts. Failure to do this will jeopardize the chances for success of the change program.

Americans who are now working or plan to work as change agents in the Middle East or other cultural areas of the world should have a basic understanding of their own culture. It is only by understanding their own culture can American change agents understand and compare differences in other cultures.

The research for this report has resulted in questions in two areas, both of which seem vitally important to better international understanding. They are (a) the need for better selection and training of overseas change agents and (b) the need for more complete understanding of the communication process in cross-cultural situations.

The first problem is beyond the limits of the undertaking reported, but it is obvious that a more thorough job of selection and training of Americans for overseas work would lessen the problem of adjustment by change agents after their arrival to the post of their assignment. More thorough training should lessen the problem of cross-cultural communication with the client community. For these and other pertinent reasons, this problem merits further study.

It was found from the research for this report that

little study has been done on the actual communication process in a cross-cultural situation. The problems that keep arising in cross-cultural communications on the international level down to the individual change agent working in a strange culture indicates that perhaps we don't actually know how to communicate with representatives of other cultures.

Much has been recorded about the communication process, how it works in the United States and how it should work in other cultures. However, the literature is noticeably silent about how this process actually works between cultures. We aren't sure how much of our thoughts or how many of our ideas are actually transferred in interaction with people of another culture.

Much could be learned from studies of interviews between change agents and the client community to discover how the change agent was interpreting the client community and how the client community was interpreting the change agent. In this way we may discover reactions, points of friction, and miscommunication that we did not know existed.

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THE CHANGE AGENT AND CULTURAL VALUES: CASE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The number of people being sent overseas by the United States and private agencies to work in developing countries as change agents is increasing each year. Though an increasing amount of money and personnel is being spent in developing countries, it has gained neither the respect nor affection of the people of recipient countries. The primary reason for this attitude is our lack of knowledge about other cultures and the difficulty of cross-cultural communication.

It was the purpose of this study to investigate some of the cultural factors affecting change agents that work in developing countries of the Middle East. Specific objectives were to (1) help new change agents to better understand their reactions to strange cultural situations; (2) assist change agents to understand some of the important factors affecting the cultural change process; (3) help change agents understand the problems of communication between two cultures; and (4) assist American change agents to understand their own culture in order to make comparison of cultural values and better understand the difference between American and Middle East cultural traits.

The information for this report was obtained from a review of the literature concerning this subject. Additional information was provided by the observations of the writer during his twelve years experience as a change

agent in Middls East and Far East countries.

It was found from this study that overseas changs agents experisnce csrtain emotional strssses whsn they enter a nsw culturs. This reaction is rsfsrred to as "culturs shock." It results from suddenly being rsmovsd from familiar surroundings and plaoed into a strange sst-ting whsrs nothing can be taken for granted. Fortunately, most American change agents, after obtaining initial understanding of the new culturs, ars able to maks the necessary adjustment and work sffectively with the clisnt community.

Skill in cross-cultural communication is ons of the greatest assets of American change agents. In order to develop this skill they must understand ths communication procsss. Cross-cultural communication is much sasier when changs agents and ths client community use the sams spoksn language. The local language can be learned, but thsre ars so many implicit and explicit oharacteristics of oom-munication that full meaning can be obtained only through a oomplete understanding of the culture.

Changs agsnts are usually ssnt to recipient countries for a limited time with specific responsibilitiss. Most changs agents do not learn the looal languags suffioiently well to sxpress ideas and communicats techniquss to the client community. The alternative is to uss an interprstsr.

Care should be exercised in the selection of an interpreter. The ideal situation is to select an interpreter from the client community who is identified by training and interest with the change agent's specialty. Cultural empathy and a wide knowledge of English are important qualifications for interpreters.

The exchange of ideas and techniques from change agents to the client community involves the institutions and values of the cooperating culture. Unless the cultural context is taken into consideration, development objectives in any field of endeavor will run the risk of failure.

Comparisons were made of some of the differences between American and Middle East cultural values that change agents encounter in initiation of development work in the Middle East. Difference in concepts of time, work, religion, nationalism, family and community, personal relationships, segmentation, and generosity and hospitality were found to be important.